

Definitely, Totally, Just Friends by residentfangirl2104

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Summary:

Mike Wheeler was straight.

100% pure blooded heterosexual.

And if he was rapidly falling for his best friend, well, as long as he kept denying it, it would be fine, right?

Definitely, Totally, Just Friends

Author's Note:

This takes place one year after the end of season 3, and the Byers and Eleven returned from the city about 6 months ago. Also, El has joined Hawkins High and is going to school with the rest of them.

Anyway, this is my first fic, so I hope you like it!

Comments are much appreciated.

Thanks for reading!

Mike Wheeler was straight.

100% pure blooded heterosexual.

Not that he was homophobic or anything, it's just that he liked GIRLS. And only girls. No matter that he kept getting lost in his best friend's eyes every time he looked at them, like they were oceans he could drown in. No matter that his heart thudded against his ribcage everytime Will smiled that beautiful, signature smile of his. No matter that it was Will's face he had imagined every time he had kissed his now ex-girlfriend. No, that was just how best friends worked, right?

Yep. Definitely straight.

And even if that wasn't the case, Mike wasn't going to let himself dwell on it.

Especially not right now. Not while he and Will were sprawled on the floor in Mike's basement, working on a D&D campaign together.

"Here, I'm done with this one." Will's words roused Mike from his thoughts. Looking over, he saw Will showing him an impressive sketch of a new character for their campaign.

"This is so good! Exactly how I imagined her." Will's face lit up at the compliment, and Mike's heart leapt at the expression. No, he said to himself, shoving that thought away. Don't think that way.

"Thanks, but I could definitely improve the design. Wait, I had another idea I wanted to show you", Will said, pulling up his giant binder of drawings, hunting through it for something. It slips from his hands, the drawings scattering across the floor. Mike moved to help him pick them up, when his eyes fell on a drawing that had come to rest by him. A drawing of two boys with their arms around each other, both staring into the other's eyes. Two boys who looked suspiciously familiar, considering the shorter one's bowl cut and the taller one's curls of hair.

He reached to pick the drawing up and inspect it closer, and his and Will's hands brushed as they touched it at the same time. A jolt of electricity danced through his body at the sudden contact, and his face heated up.

Will snatched the drawing out of his hands, and Mike looked up and noticed his cheeks were strangely red. Suddenly looking flustered and panicked, he grabbed it and the rest of the drawings and started stuffing them back into the binder, then said in a rather strangled voice, "Uh, sorry, yeah I must have left it at home. Speaking of, um, Mom expected me home by now and you know how overprotective she gets. So I'll see you tomorrow?" Not waiting for an answer he practically fled the basement, throwing a "Bye, Mike!" Over his shoulder before disappearing out of the house.

Mike stood there, reeling from what had just happened. Will had a drawing of two boys, that totally and probably weren't them, clinging on to each other. Well, even friends hug, right? It was probably just a drawing of when Will had returned from the Upside Down or something. That is, if it was them at all. It probably wasn't anyone real at all, just some drawing practice.

Yeah, that was it.

Pushing any and all other thoughts out of his head, he forced himself to return to the campaign planning.

It was Wednesday, and the Party was sitting at two tables joined together in the cafeteria for lunch. Dustin was loudly complaining

about the cafeteria food, and Lucas was enthusiastically agreeing, while Max was throwing chunks of bread at them to shut them up. El was rambling to Will about her Biology test, and her quest of trying to use her powers to sneak a look at the others' papers whenever she could. Will was in the middle of halfheartedly reprimanding her when he noticed Mike looking at him and sent him a grin over the table, his hazel eyes shining. Mike's heart fluttered a little, which he immediately wrote off as just the happiness of being here surrounded by all his friends, and not in mortal danger for once.

El noticed the look and a smirk crossed her face.

"Mike! How is your campaign going? I heard you and Will made some good....progress the other day." She said innocently.

Will choked on his sandwich, his face once again turning a curious shade of red. Even Max, Lucas and Dustin stopped to look at what was going on. After a couple of loud coughs, he just said, "Yeah, we-uh- created a couple characters. Showed him some of my practice sketches and all that."

So Mike was right, naturally. And he totally wasn't disappointed about that, of course not! He was happy that he was right. Yeah, that wasn't a sinking feeling in his stomach, no, that was....the feeling of being right. That was totally it. Maybe it was a little bit of jealousy at Will's drawing skills- yeah, that explains it.

El's gaze darted between Mike and Will, with a knowing look in her eyes. Why did it feel like she knew something that Mike didn't? He was probably just imagining it anyway- he had the tendency to overanalyze everything that El did.

"Practice drawings of what? Can we see?" Lucas interjected, looking slightly miffed at not being in on whatever they were talking about. Max coughed and not-so-subtly elbowed him, saying, "I'm sure we'll see whatever these drawings are during the campaign, stalker." Affronted by the nickname, he retorted back. Max glanced between Mike and Will the same way El had before returning to squabbling with her boyfriend. For the second time, Mike wondered why it seemed like others knew things about himself that he didn't know yet.

Will's eyes were trained on Mike's face, his expression unreadable. When he realized Mike was looking back he immediately looked away and started talking with El as if that was what he'd been doing the whole time. Mike forced himself to tear his gaze away and continue eating, forcing his thoughts away from the conversation that he somehow couldn't figure out the meaning of.

Will and Mike were sitting in Castle Byers, doing their Geometry homework together. Truth be told, Mike actually was better at math than Will, and could've done this just as well, if not better, by himself, but he found himself looking for an excuse to spend time with Will and homework seemed convenient. Both the fact that he wanted, no, needed to spend time alone with Will and the fact that he'd jump at any excuse for it was scary. His policy of if-I-keep-denying-my-feelings-they-won't-be-true was rapidly failing.

"Mike? Mike! Earth to Mike!" Mike realized he had zoned out and didn't notice anything Will had said.

"Sorry, yeah? What is it?"

Will gave him a strange look and then said, "I was saying, would you mind taking a bit of a break? There's only so many triangles you can look at until they all start looking the same."

"Oh, yeah. If they ask me one more time about the sin of theta I might actually set a demogorgon on them." Immediately after saying it, Mike realized his mistake and flustered, he said, "Wait, no that's not what I meant. I'm sorry, I wasn't thinking-"

"No, it's okay, Mike." He always said that.

"No, it was thoughtless of me, I shouldn't have-"

Will gently put his hand on Mike's to stop him. "No, I'm serious. It-It's like everyone always treats me like I'm made of glass, you know? Ever since....ever since the Upside Down, everyone's always extra careful with me, like I'm fragile, like I might break any moment. But you've never treated me like....like I'm some kind of china doll. You

never treat me any different from how you did before. And I- I like that. I like that when I'm with you...it feels like none of that stuff ever happened."

Mike swallowed thickly. "I like that too."

I like you.

The unsaid words hung in the air between them, making the atmosphere so thick with tension a knife could cut through it.

He was suddenly hyper-aware of Will's hand still resting on his own. His heart raced so fast, Will could probably feel it. It would be so easy to just turn his hand around, capture Will's with his own, and intertwine their fingers together. It would be so easy to just say the words that were echoing in his mind.

I like you.

Despite the words playing on Mike's lips, he swallowed them, letting them weigh heavily on his heart. Better the pain of being with him without being with him than to not have him at all. Which would undoubtedly be the only consequence of letting the forbidden words slip, because even if Mike was deep in the treacherous waters of his feelings, Will wasn't even on the shore.

The turmoil was probably showing on his face, because Will looked at him, somewhat concerned.

"Are you okay, Mike?"

Face rapidly reddening, Mike just let out a short laugh. "See, now I get why people asking you that constantly infuriates you so much."

"Not when you're the one asking." Will mumbled under his breath. Mike's heart skipped a beat.

"What?"

"Nothing. I didn't say anything."

That was, once again, strange. Will wasn't usually one to take his

words back - but then again he clearly was reading too much into things. Like with everything else nowadays, he forced himself to believe it meant nothing.

“Maybe we should just- get this homework done and over with. No point in prolonging it, right?”

Will looked slightly downcast at that, but said anyway, “Yeah, let’s just finish it.”

He returned to his math, forcing himself to look away from Will and at the work instead.

“And then she said, ‘You’re a weak punk-ass bitch anyway,’”

Will gasped. “She did not.”

“She did! Don’t underestimate the power of Max Mayfield when someone tries to tell her what to do.”

Will laughed, a pure, clear sound that rang out in the air and made something in Mike’s stomach flutter. They were sitting in Will’s bedroom, chatting and listening to a mixtape Will made.

“The things I miss when I don’t go to school for ONE DAY. It’s like the universe is conspiring against me!”

“True. You missed Jennifer Hayes complaining over your absence and then trying to wheedle out of me the information of whether you have a girlfriend or not.”

Will grimaced. “You’d think she’d have given up after I showed absolutely zero interest in her for years.”

Mike raised an eyebrow. “So you don’t like her? Even though you danced with her at the Snow Ball two years ago?”

Will looked affronted at the thought. “I was being nice. I would much rather have danced with y- my friends, anyway.”

Something warm ignited inside Mike at the reassurance that he wasn't about to see his crush date a random girl. *'Don't get ahead of yourself, just because he doesn't like Jennifer Hayes doesn't mean he likes you'*, the logical part of his brain argued back. He hated that part of his brain.

"It's fine, it was a middle school dance anyway. Besides, prom's coming up, so it's a chance to have a school dance where you don't have to dance with someone who calls you Zombie Boy the whole time."

Will grinned. "The only way that would happen is if I danced with one of you guys."

"I volunteer", Mike joked, trying to ignore the fluttering in his chest.

Will's cheeks turned red once again, and Mike wondered if he was sick or something- that was happening increasingly often.

Will opened his mouth to say something in return when they were interrupted by Joyce's voice.

"Will! Come over here, I need your help with something."

"I'll be back in a second, just wait here." Will said, scrambling out of the room. Left to his own devices, Mike looked around at the room. He hadn't spent much time here ever since Will came back - it had barely been six months, and Will preferred to hang out at Mike's place or Castle Byers. It didn't look that much different than it used to - except some of the film posters had been exchanged with newer ones, and there were a couple of drawings on the walls that hadn't been there before - a sketch of the entire party, Mike noted with a smile, and one of a cleric that he assumed was Will standing against the backdrop of a rainbow. Will always had liked rainbows.

Beside his table, another drawing was up - the distinctive sketch of his own face stared back at him, with his name scrawled beside it. Mike's heart leapt at the thought that Will kept a drawing of him right in front of his bed, where it was right in his line of sight. His eyes traversed from the drawing to his desk, which was mostly empty save for a notebook that he had never seen Will use before. He didn't

want to cross any boundaries but...curiosity got the better of him and he grabbed the notebook to see what it contained.

Flipping through it, he saw page after pages of....letters? They looked like letters addressed to different people that he never intended to send. Realizing it was probably private, he was going to put it back - until he noticed his name on the last page. A mixture of anticipation and fear coursed through him, mixed with a little bit of guilt, as he started reading.

Dear Mike,

Remember when we were five years old? I was sitting by myself on the swings, and I was so lonely and so scared. But then you came up to me, and you asked if I wanted to be your friend. You say it's the best thing you've ever done, but the best thing I've ever done is say yes.

I remember when I was in the Upside Down, and the demogorgon was hunting me, and I was so sure I was going to die. At first I fought but then I thought, would it even be so bad if it does get me? I know Mom would be stricken at first, but I'd be one less thing for her to worry about. Dad would probably be ecstatic, and I wouldn't have to worry about Troy and James, or everyone else picking on me.

Or how everyone would react if they knew I liked boys.

But then I thought about you. And I thought about D&D with you, and hanging out, and always, always sticking together no matter what. I thought about how you said you would be so lonely without me, and I thought about how devastated you'd be if I died. And so I fought, because I knew you were out there fighting for me too.

I remember when I thought I was going crazy, and I thought I was alone, but you grabbed my hand and brought me home. You told me that if we go crazy, we'd go crazy together. I think that's when I knew. That I was definitely going crazy, but not because of the Upside Down or the trauma. I was crazy in love with you.

And I hate every second of it, because I know you don't love me, and I know you're not....like me. And if you knew how I felt, you'd probably think it was disgusting, or wrong, and I'd probably lose you. So it turns

out, we're not going to go crazy together. Every time I thought I was alone, you were always there; except now. And I can't do anything about it, because this is the only way I'll ever have you at all.

Love, Will

Mike stared at the words in shock. *I was crazy in love with you.* Disbelief coursed through him, followed by an inkling of hope. His breath caught in his throat and his heart raced as the full meaning of what he'd just read hit him.

He heard a loud gasp, and he looked up to see Will's horrified face. He had stopped in his tracks when he saw Mike holding the notebook containing his deepest secrets.

The shock and horror in Will's expression changed to panic, and he abruptly turned on his heel to run. On an impulse, Mike grabbed his hand to stop him from leaving.

Will turned around, but kept his face down and refused to look into Mike's eyes.

"You....you're in love with me?"

"I'm sorry, Mike, I'm so, so sorry. I've tried to fight the way I feel for so long but I just can't, and I-"

"Will", Mike insisted, trying to get a word in.

"I understand if you hate me, or don't want to be friends with me anymore, I just-"

"Will, let me-"

"I never wanted to ruin our friendship and that's why I kept quiet about it all, but now that it's over, I want to at least be able to say goodbye and-"

"WILL!" Before Will could continue talking, Mike cupped his face in his hands, and lifting it up, he kissed him.

And it felt like a thousand butterflies had taken flight inside his

stomach at once. It felt like his heart was soaring and all his fears had vanished and every second of insecurity and pain and heartbreak was stripped away from him until all that was left was the pure, unadulterated happiness he felt when he was with Will.

It felt like home.

Drawing back, he looked down into Will's wide eyes, shining with happiness and adoration and disbelief. Emotions crashed over him like waves crashing onto a shore, and he knew he was hopelessly and completely in love. But with the way Will was looking at him right now, maybe that was okay. Better than okay.

"I love you", he blurted out. *Just because it's okay doesn't mean you have to say it already, you idiot.* "I've loved you for a while now but I tried to fight it because I knew how society feels about people like me, people like us, and I didn't want to admit to myself that I was...." He swallowed, nervous of saying the word the first time. "Gay. And I was so, so, scared of what you'd think of me if you knew, because I was so sure you didn't like me back-"

Will let out a disbelieving laugh. "You didn't know I liked you back? El knew, I'm pretty sure Max knew, and I half think Mom knows too. I wasn't exactly subtle, Michael."

Mike winced at the use of his full name. "I guess it felt too good to be true. I was practically drowning in feelings that I thought you'd never return", Mike rambled as all his hidden thoughts came out. "And I was scared of admitting said feelings, and even more scared of how you'd think of them, and I thought we might never be friends again if you knew and I-"

All thoughts evaporated from his mind when Will leaned in to give him another little kiss.

"It's okay now. We have each other, and we never have to be scared of losing this ever again.

Mike's mind whirled at how surreal it felt to be standing there, clasping Will's hands in his, looking into his eyes and not forcing himself to look away for once. He may have been drowning in his

feelings, but Will was his lifeboat, and as long as he had him, they would stay afloat together.

"You're right. We aren't going to lose this - us - no matter what happens."

"Does- does this mean you'll be my boyfriend?" Will nervously said, words tumbling one over the other.

Boyfriend. Mike did a double take when he heard that. God, yes, he wanted to be Will's boyfriend.

"But....you know what people think of...people like us. You know how they'd look at us if they knew, you know better than I ever would. To make such a big leap... isn't it kind of crazy?"

Will let out a laugh that sounded suspiciously like a half-sob. "Yeah, well, crazy together, right? Isn't that what we promised?"

Mike felt the swelling of emotions in his chest, looked at the boy in front of him that he never thought he'd have. The boy he would always choose, but who he had thought would never choose him back. If this was crazy, then maybe he wanted to be crazy.

"Way ahead of you."